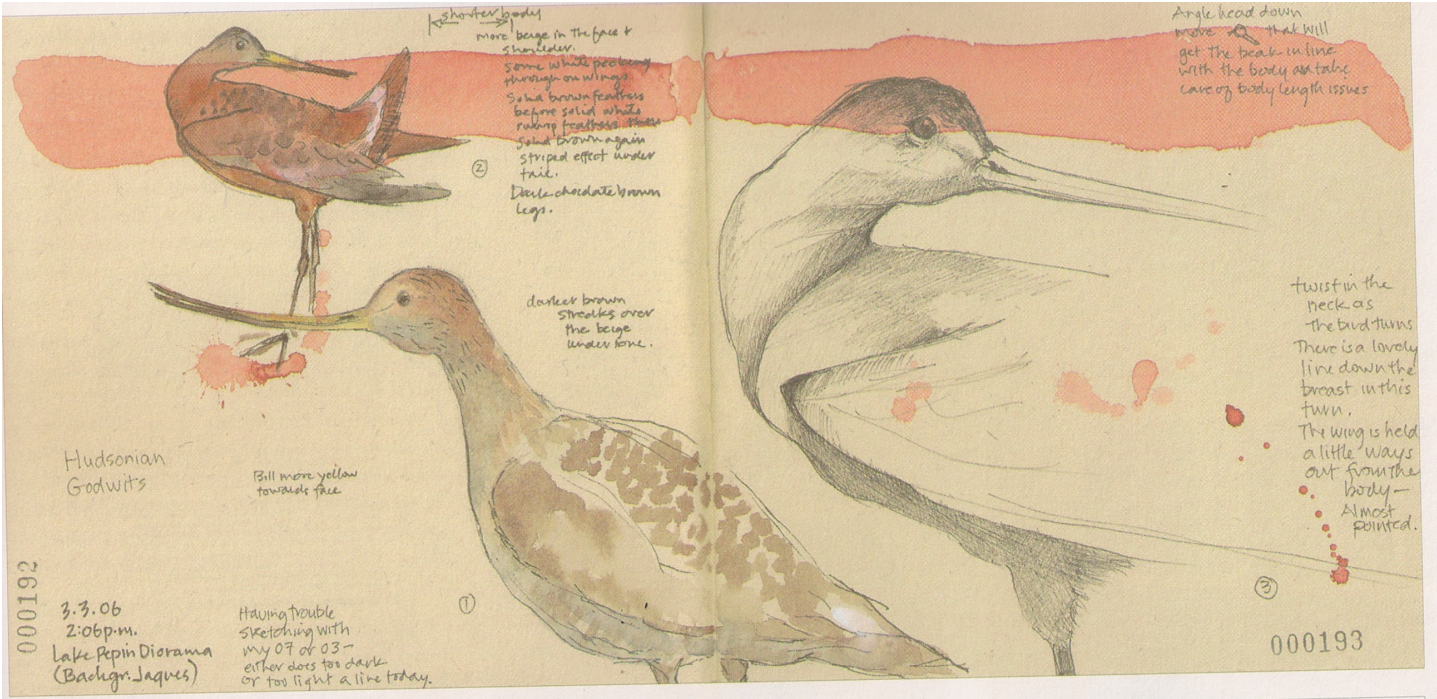


Both Pam Johnson Brickell's and Gay Kraeger's pages feature large decorative title lettering, a classic trope of illustrated journals. Pam's page has a calm, meditative feel with its careful placement and comfortable setting. The corner lettering, with it's hint of implied margin, contributes to the sense that this page would settle happily into a medieval herbal.

Gay's page flirts wonderfully with the wayward and out of control - a sort of lurching rhythm in the whole thing, with the unusual decision to place the images in front of the lettering. I also like the contrast between the curly flourishes on the title calligraphy with the squared-off and angular lettering in the text.

(Technically, the title lettering is not calligraphy, since the letters are drawn, rather than being created with single strokes of a broad-edge pen)

Below is a splendid page by Roz Stendahl. Look at the rhythmic placement of the bird drawings, the flow of space through the page and the free splashes of watercolor.



AN EMPHASIS ON DESIGN

I am always interested in coming up with methods and techniques that will bring you back to the journal repeatedly, so that it becomes a habit.

Page design is like negative space - we are so busy looking at the drawings on the page, thinking that they are the sole subject matter, that we fail to recognize the way the space of the page, and the arrangement of the elements, contributes to its impact. The best drawing, if heedlessly crowded by text, will look diminished. On the other

hand, a drawing that might not stand powerfully on its own can be redeemed when combined with text that's either skillfully placed, handsome in itself, or used as a balancing force. The handwriting itself can be a work of art, but even if it isn't exceptional, the way it's distributed on the page can make it seem like it grew there, and becomes an essential part of the whole.

The two drawings on this page, by Amanda Kavanagh, use the page as a FRAME rather than as a WINDOW. By that I mean she drew a border around both pages, which creates a frame, rather than allowing the drawings to be cut off by the edge of the paper. Generally, including a frame, like the margins around the edge of book pages, creates a sense of order and containment rather than dynamism. But the calm space around a drawing can let even the craziest marks and colors shine like jewels in a plain setting.

In these examples, Amanda's distinctive running cursive script functions as language (barely readable, true), as a texture, and as a tone, as in cross-hatching. It becomes an integral part of the drawing and the page, instead of a "caption".

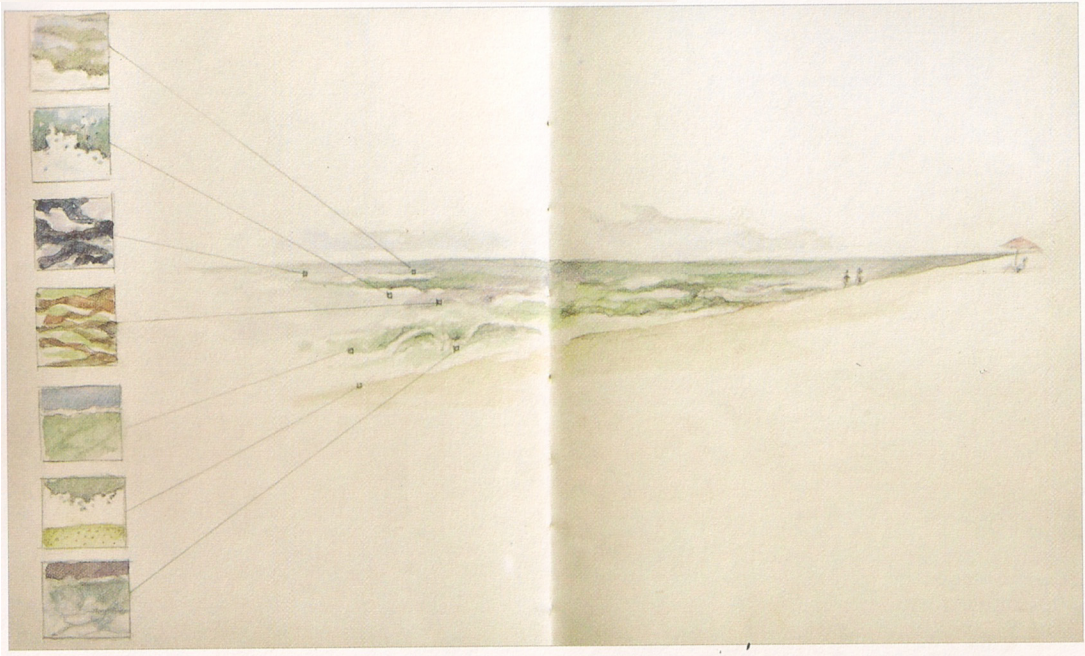
In the top drawing the dramatic division of the page is so wonderful - lettering, cat, pillow. The white of the paw breaking the right border is also a delight. In the bottom example, though each page is beautiful in its own right, the design is less obviously unified. Of course, we do proceed through the journal page by page, but I try to think exclusively in terms of page SPREADS rather than individual pages.





GRIDS FOR COLLECTIONS, GRIDS FOR COMPARISONS, GRIDS TO EXPLAIN THINGS, GRIDS FOR BIG FUN!

Top, middle, lower left:
Amanda Kavanagh;
Lower right:
Sara Midda.

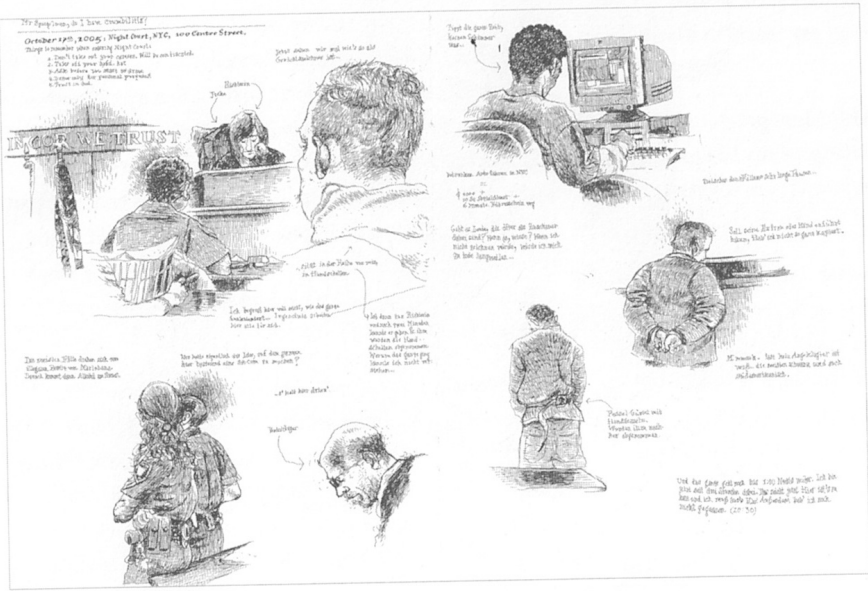


Creating a grid on the page can connect unlike things, or emphasize similarities. If your thinking is muddled or your enthusiasm is low, a grid can often give you just the simple structure you need to feel that something cool is indeed possible.

Grids banish randomness. They’re the opposite of organic design, which is displayed in the drawings on the right (equally wonderful). When we’re out in the natural world, we often find ourselves comparing things - this lichen is kind of like that one, but it’s more finely divided, and both of them are like this one, but it’s pink. Laid out on a grid you will not only learn the distinctions more quickly, you’ll remember them better.

Amanda’s middle spread also demonstrates her skill in creating dramatic contrast. The big, clean seascape, embedded in white space, is deftly balanced by the catalog of features displayed in a column. And it tells us something we want to know, too! (She has her own design studio in New York, so it’s no wonder she is so aware of how pages are put together).

I would guess that Amanda has studied the books of Sara Midda: *In and Out of the Garden*, and *Sara Midda’s South of France*, classics in the sketchbook genre. Sara’s grid of sugar cube wrapping papers is typical of her whimsical enjoyment of tiny, ordinary, overlooked things all around us.



These two pages by Christof Mueller show that one doesn’t need color on the pages to create entirely satisfying works. His drawings themselves are amazingly intricate and rich in tone and texture, but I’m especially taken with the intuitive placement of text blocks on them. The bits of writing are their own graphic elements, and because they share a density and consistent lettering style, they hang together and contribute a lot of personality to the drawings.

I’m also very impressed by the organic arrangement of drawings on the pages, their intuitive placement. But notice this: see how the white space flows through the page, finding its way around the obstacles of art and lettering. White space is a powerful shaping presence! Occasionally, as in the upper left of the spread above, the lettering will constrict the flow of white space, creating an exciting situation that our eyes love to examine and try to resolve.

